



The Sixty-fourth Season of
The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin
Concerts

National Gallery of Art
2,547th Concert

National Gallery Vocal Arts Ensemble

Rosa Lamoreaux, *artistic director*

Gregorian Chant and the Music of
Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Presented in honor of *Masterpieces in Miniature:*
Italian Manuscript Illumination from the J. Paul Getty Museum

November 6, 2005
Sunday Evening, 6:30 pm
West Building, West Garden Court

Admission free

*The audience is asked to refrain from
applauding until the intermission and the end of the program.*

Program

Gregorian Chants

Resurrexi

Introit for Easter

(Preceded by the dialogue trope *Quem queritis*)

Aspiciens a longe

Responsory for the first Sunday of Advent

(Preceded by a lesson from the book of Isaiah, chapter 1)

Missus est Gabriel

Responsory for the second Sunday of Advent

(Preceded by a lesson from the book of Isaiah, chapter 7)

Hodie nobis celorum rex

Responsory for Christmas

(Preceded by a lesson from the book of Isaiah, chapter 9)

Laude

Christo è nato e humanato

Facciam laude a tuct'l sancti

INTERMISSION

Gregorian Antiphon

Veni sponsa Christi

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525 – 1594)

Motet: *Veni sponsa Christi*

Palestrina

Mass: *Veni sponsa Christi*

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Sanctus

Agnus Dei

The Musicians

This is the second season of concerts at the National Gallery in which its resident Vocal Arts Ensemble performs as a chamber choir. The ensemble last year presented two concerts in honor of exhibitions: nineteenth-century vocal chamber music in connection with *All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852–1860*; and the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Theile (1646–1724) in conjunction with *Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits*. For this concert the ensemble takes as a starting point the Gregorian chants *Resurrexi* and *Aspiciens a longe*, music that appears in two of the manuscripts in the exhibition *Masterpieces in Miniature: Italian Manuscript Illumination from the J. Paul Getty Museum*.

The singers participating in this concert are sopranos Rosa Lamoreaux and Gisele Becker, altos Barbara Hollinshead and Roger O. Isaacs, tenors Gary Glick and Gerald Stacey, and basses Bobb Robinson and Robert W. Tudor. The Gallery music department extends special thanks to Bobb Robinson, who assumed responsibility for the artistic direction of this program in addition to his role as a singer, and to Ruth Steiner, professor of music emerita at the Catholic University of America, who generously shared her expertise in the field of chant as an advisor for this project and provided the program notes.

Program Notes

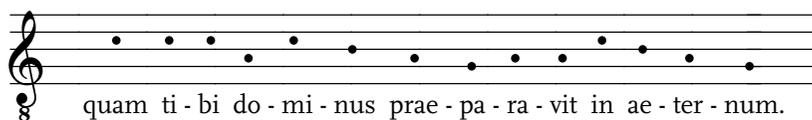
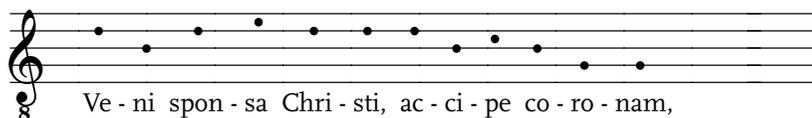
Gregorian chant is not often performed in concerts, because it primarily functions as a form of prayer, specifically in the context of Roman Catholic worship. The special circumstances of this program—music in association with an exhibition of manuscripts, many of which contain musical notation—give rise to a concert presentation. The first chant is an introit, or entrance song, often sung as choir and clergy process to the place in the church or cathedral where the Mass is to be celebrated. Before singing the introit proper, which begins with the text *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum* (I arose and am still with thee), the ensemble performs one of the tropes that was traditionally sung as an introduction to an introit in the medieval period. Tropes such as *Quem queritis*, which presents a dialogue between an angel and the women who were looking for the body of Jesus in his tomb, are seen as the first manifestation of liturgical drama.

The second, third, and fourth chants in the program are responsories, relatively long and elaborate chants that are sung during matins, the first of the daily services known collectively as the Divine Office. A typical matins service in a cathedral would have included nine readings from the Bible or other sacred literature, each followed by a responsory. In order to duplicate the context in which this music would have been heard in the medieval and Renaissance eras, each responsory in this performance is preceded by an appropriate scriptural reading. A familiar modern equivalent to matins is the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols that is broadcast worldwide each Christmas Eve from Westminster Abbey in London. The importance of the responsories is suggested by the fact that in illuminated manuscripts it is the initial letter of the responsory that is decorated, rather than the first letter of the text of the lesson.

Two examples of *laude*, devotional songs that are for the most part in the vernacular, conclude the first half of the program. *Laude* were sung by religious confraternities in Italy as early as the thirteenth century. The

lavish decoration of a manuscript gives evidence of the relative prosperity of the guilds and brotherhoods who met to sing the *laude* as well as the devotion that prompted such a generous use of resources. Although the notation of *laude*, like the notation of chant, gives no indication as to the intended rhythm, these works are often performed with strongly marked rhythms, with the blessing of most musicologists. Some members of the scholarly community believe that because the notes all look essentially the same they were meant to be given equal value, while others point to the rhythmic notation in a few isolated examples as a guide for the performance of all music in this style. But the more widely held view is that the rhythms have to be invented for each performance, along with the rhythmic patterns used by any accompanying instruments, and that this was the practice in ancient times.

The role of the antiphon in the Divine Office is to introduce and follow the chanting of a psalm. The antiphon *Veni sponsa Christi* (Come, Thou Bride of Christ) is one of series of chants that were often used on the feast day of a female saint, few of whom had specific liturgies such as existed for the feast days of major saints and apostles. The text is among several dozen that would have been sung to the same melody, and the melody consists of four musical phrases that are relatively easy to identify. The first begins with a descending third and a return to the initial note. The second, which corresponds to the words *accipe coronam*, also begins with a descending third but continues to descend thereafter. The third phrase begins with the words *quam tibi*, and the fourth with the word *praeeparavit*.



For both his motet and Mass of the same title Palestrina uses this Gregorian antiphon as the basic melodic material. In the motet each section is a polyphonic elaboration of one phrase of the chant. The Mass belongs to a genre that was identified until recent times as a “parody Mass” but is now termed an “imitation Mass,” reflecting the work’s derivation from an extant polyphonic composition. In this case borrowings from the motet are most easily discernible in the *Kyrie*, but they also recur throughout the Mass.

The polyphonic works in this program make the point that elaboration was employed not only by the artists who recorded and preserved chants in manuscripts but also by those who realized the music in performing it. This elaboration was an important aspect of the development of musical style during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and any understanding of the history of music in Western Europe must acknowledge the role that Gregorian chant played as an essential part of its foundation.

Program notes by Ruth Steiner

For the convenience of concertgoers
the Garden Café remains open until 6:00 pm.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the
performance is not allowed. Please be sure that cell phones,
pagers, and other electronic devices are turned off.

Please note that late entry or reentry after 6:30 pm
is not permitted.

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COVER: Belbello da Pavia, *Initial A: Young Christ Blessing*, leaf from
an antiphonal, Venice, 1467–1470, Ms. 96, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles